

"WASHINGTON'S" BLIND ALUMNI

Don Donaldson

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# "Washington's" Blind Alumni

By DON DONALDSON

*Editor's note:* Mr. Donaldson himself was blind for fourteen years. In the fall of 1932 his eyesight was restored through an operation. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1934 and was awarded at that time a scholarship which enabled him to attend Harvard University for the past year. An article of his appeared recently in the *Readers Digest*. He is now a member of the faculty of Perkins Institution, Boston, Massachusetts.

UNIVERSITY of Washington alumni may recall having seen during undergraduate days one or more blind students on the campus, elbowing through crowded corridors or shuffling along cinder paths. The question must have arisen then: What can these courageous blind persons do after graduation? Getting an education without sight, remarkable as that is, is possible; but what is there for a blind person to do after academic life has ended?

In answer to this question, I am happy to report the success of our blind alumni. Records show that there are eight blind persons who have graduated from "Washington." The only woman to achieve this has since married and is living an abundant and active life. Of the seven men, two are administrators, two lawyers, two teachers, and one a graduate student. Since three of these have graduated within the past two years, sufficient time has not elapsed to indicate minutely what measure of success life holds for them. Suffice to say, two are embarked already on promising careers. But of the older four — Robert B. Irwin, George F. Meyer, Lyle Von Ericksen and Emil B. Fries — there is the following to relate:

ROBERT IRWIN early determined to disregard the obstacle of blindness, incurred at the age of five. The first pupil to graduate from the Washington School for the Blind, young Irwin worked his way through the University of Washington, taking his B.A. degree in 1906 and a year later his Master's at Harvard. Further graduate study was discontinued in 1909, when he was called to Cleveland to become supervisor of the blind in that city. Here he pioneered in establishing sight-saving classes, making education possible for children whose sight is too great to classify them as blind and yet too little for regular public-school work without special assistance. When, in 1923, the American Foundation for the Blind, a national agency, was organized, Mr. Irwin went to New York City to become its director of research and later its executive director. During the intervening years he has written books and many articles relative to the blind, has

promoted the use of large type for sight-saving classes in this country and abroad, as well as having been president of the American Association of Workers for the Blind and, in 1930, chairman of the sub-committee on the visually handicapped of the White House Conference. Robert Irwin, more than anyone else, is responsible for development of the Talking Book, a recording process, which, for the first time, enables the more-slowly-reading blind to enjoy literature. Through Mr. Irwin's untiring effort this Talking Book is now published and circulated through twenty-seven public libraries having departments for the blind.

GEORGE MEYER'S career parallels that of Robert Irwin in many respects. He, too, graduated from the Washington School for the Blind and later the University of Washington (1918), winning a valuable scholarship for excellent work. After graduation he accepted a position with the department for the blind in Cleveland under the direction of Mr. Irwin. A year later Minneapolis engaged him to organize its day-school classes for the blind and semi-sighted. Retained in an advisory capacity by the Minneapolis board of education, Mr. Meyer came to Seattle to organize similar classes. Since 1921 he has remained as supervisor of classes for the blind and semi-sighted in the public schools of Minneapolis. As an authority on matters affecting the blind, Mr. Meyer, like Mr. Irwin, is internationally known, serving as treasurer of the American Association of Workers for the Blind from 1927 to 1931 and as president of that organization from 1931 to 1933. His activities in this field have taken him to Europe, once in 1931 as delegate to the World Conference for Blind and again in 1932 as a member of the American Committee at the London Conference which agreed on a uniform braille code for the English-speaking world. Articles by Mr. Meyer frequently appear in the pages of *The Teachers' Forum* and *The Outlook for the Blind*.

LYLE VON ERICKSEN of Spokane is a third blind alumnus who is making a splendid reputation. Losing his sight during early childhood,

young Von Ericksen forged ahead with his education. While at Washington he placed first in chemistry and made an enviable record as a brilliant student. In 1922 he received his B.A. degree and later an L.L.B. degree at Harvard. Since completing his formal education Mr. Von Ericksen has been practicing law in Spokane, doing well in his profession. In 1920, while still a student at Washington, Von Ericksen founded the Eastern Washington Association for the Blind, an organization which for fifteen years has brought good fellowship among the sightless of the Inland Empire, striven for mutual culture and improvement of its members and kept alive to all questions of vital interest to those who do not see. He has long presided as president of this association, which now boasts a membership of approximately one hundred and twenty members, and his place among his fellow blind, as well as among his "seeing" friends, is one of leadership and inspiration.

EMIL B. FRIES, like those alumni just discussed, received his preparatory training at the Washington School for the Blind. But whereas the others are totally blind, Mr. Fries has partial sight; not enough, however, to enable him to read print or to recognize acquaintances. Despite this tremendous handicap, Fries majored in history and earned his entire expenses through the University by tuning pianos. A term paper which he wrote during his senior year was recognized to be of such worth as to merit publication in the April-June, 1930, issue of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*. Receiving his B.A. degree in 1930, Fries continued graduate study until called to head the vocational department at the Washington School for the Blind. In this latter capacity he has remained for the past four years, achieving great success in training the blind children of the state to become useful, self-supporting citizens.

And so has been answered the query: What are our blind alumni doing?

Undaunted by deprivation of eyesight, buoyed by a will that refuses to recognize defeat, and possessing the ability to make good, these individuals have attained positions of eminence. Theirs has been a long and arduous struggle, yet they have emerged in triumph. They are alumni of whom "Washington" may rightly be proud.

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A good teacher, proud of her calling, enjoying the respect and admiration of the community, free of unnecessary financial worries, is the heart of education.—*Minneapolis Star*.



3. *National Standards: (a) Practice in 48 states<sup>1</sup>; (b) Moehlman's Standard<sup>2</sup>; (c) Toothaker's Standard<sup>3</sup>.*

	(a)	(b)	(c)
Control .....	4.3%	5.0%	4.0%
Instruction .....	72.3	73.0	74.0
Operation .....	9.5	12.0	11.0
Maintenance .....	3.9	5.0	4.0
Auxiliaries .....	5.3	2.0	5.0
Miscellaneous .....	4.7	1.0	2.0

1. "Expenditures and Personnel for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, State School Systems, 1930-31", National Education Association.

2. Moehlman, A. B., *Public School Finance*. Rand McNally & Company, 1927.

3. Toothaker, A. H., "A Basic Standard for the School Budget", *American School Board Journal*, September, 1923.

## V. SOME SUGGESTIONS ON SCHOOL BUDGET CONSTRUCTION

By E. PAUL TODD \*

*Superintendent of Schools, Dupont.*

The intent of the state in providing support from state and county sources was to assure adequate revenue for the instruction of pupils. Instruction is the first charge on any school board. To keep the building in a sanitary and comfortable condition is the second charge. The first three items of the budget—Control, Instruction and Operation—care for the primary charges on the board. Revenues required for these major uses clearly have first claim in budget-making.

Successful businesses, whether public or private, big or little, usually build their budgets according to a well-defined pattern. Revenue is estimated, and then the budget is built on a percentage basis so as to insure that the important items are provided with sufficient funds. School districts using the same method find material benefit in more adequate instruction, in economical operating costs and in better understanding of school business on the part of school patrons.

Patterns for budget-making should recognize at least two types of school district—(1) the small grade school with one or more teachers, all teaching full time, and (2) the larger district having a full-time administrator, whose salary is budgeted under "Control" rather than under "Instruction".

Suitable percentage patterns for these two sizes of districts where no transportation<sup>1</sup> is involved follow:

	Smaller District	Larger District
Control .....	1.5%	5-15%
Instruction .....	75.0%	65-70%
Operation .....	10-14%	10-14%
Maintenance (current fund) <sup>2</sup> .....	2%	2%
Auxiliary, Miscellaneous .....	Bal.	Bal.

<sup>1</sup> Transportation cost will necessitate readjustment in a budget pattern without transportation cost.

<sup>2</sup> Revenues for maintenance in excess of 2% of the budget should be supplied from cash surplus or by special levy.

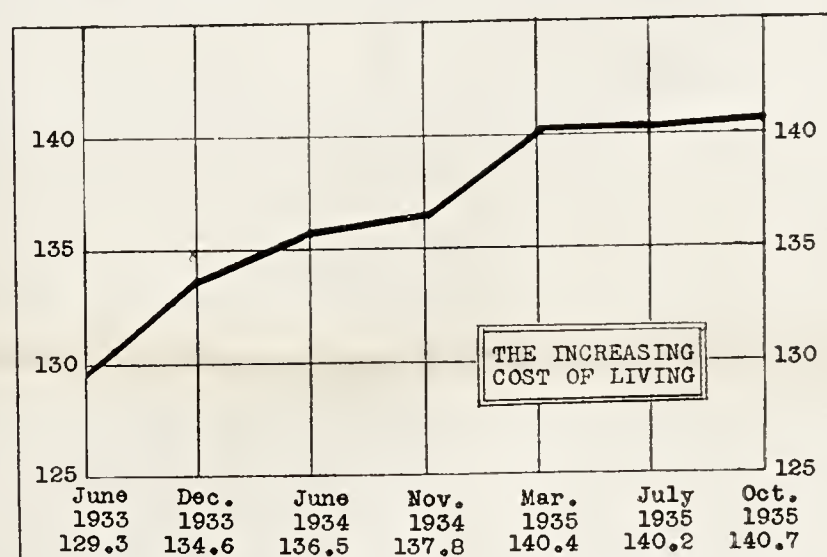
This outline of budget construction has been used for the past three years in one of the larger counties in the state (Pierce). In that period the number of districts needing to vote additional levies was reduced one-third, and a number of districts reduced the amount of levy necessary to operate at increased efficiency. Standards of instruction were maintained, and the tax money has been spent on as intelligent a basis as the expenditures of a big business firm. Instruction of the children has been safeguarded.

\*As assistant county superintendent of schools in Pierce County during depression years Mr. Todd specialized on budget assistance to school directors of the county.

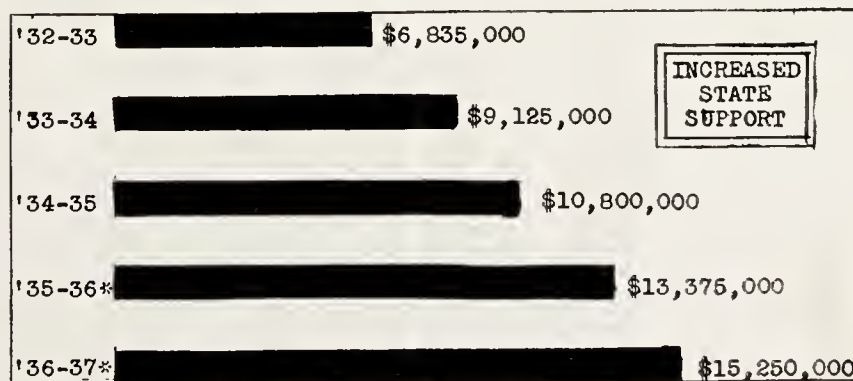
## VI. SOME PERTINENT CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING SCHOOL SALARIES

1. *Higher Certification Standards.* During the depression years, while salaries have been greatly reduced due to general economic conditions, the standards of certification requirement in Washington have been raised. The additional year of training now required (three years normal school for all elementary teachers and five years of college for all high school teachers) entails a considerable increase in the professional "investment" of teachers, entitling them to additional compensation. On the basis of present practice in salary standards for elementary and high school teachers an additional year's training is valued at at least \$100 a year in salary.

2. *Increasing Cost of Living.* Cost of living is again rising. The Cost of Living Index of the U. S. Department of Labor shows an increase from the depression low of 129.3 in 1933 to 140.7 in October, 1935, an increase of 9%. In the last year before the depression decline the index was a little above 170.



3. *Increased State Support.* The district no longer contributes the major share of school support as previously. State support, now approximately 55%, and county support together total about 70% of the current school cost, leaving only 30% to the local district. The increase in state support makes it possible to further equalize educational standards.



\* Budget estimate.

4. *Today's Salaries and Tomorrow's Teachers.*—As the seed of next year is produced this year, so the school salaries of the present generation affect the school standards of the next. Low salaries, even though good teachers accept them in these difficult times, tend strongly to divert the young people now in the schools who should be preparing to teach into other more promising fields. Thus school service of the next generation loses at source the highest abilities which it will sorely need. That society in 1956 will impose even heavier responsibilities on the schools than in 1936 and will require still greater competence in teaching there is no doubt. In a measure the salaries of today determine the teaching tomorrow.



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